



Worcester County Department of Social Services Annual Report July 2012 - June 2013



Worcester County Department of Social
Services
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State of Maryland
Martin O'Malley, *Governor*
Anthony G. Brown, *Lt. Governor*
Maryland Department of Human Resources
Theodore Dallas, *Secretary*
Peter J. Buesgens, *Director*



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Vision

WE ENVISION WORCESTER COUNTY AS A SAFE COMMUNITY, FREE OF EXPLOITATION, NEGLECT, AND ABUSE, WHERE INDIVIDUALS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES BY STRIVING FOR INDEPENDENCE AND ACHIEVING SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

Mission

WORCESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CITIZENS OF WORCESTER COUNTY BY EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT AND PRODUCTIVE, ASSURING THAT PREVENTION EFFORTS PROTECT THE VULNERABLE, POOLING RESOURCES AND MAXIMIZING PARTNERSHIPS WHILE RESPECTING THE DIVERSE CULTURAL VALUES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AND OUR AGENCY.

INTRODUCTION

Director's Message

The Worcester County Department of Social Services performed admirably in FY 2013. As in past years our Family Investment staff continued administering assistance to record numbers of citizens in financial crisis. These record numbers of applications were not only processed timely, but FIA staff was also able to decrease their error rate over the course of the year. Our FIA staff are also able on a pace to surpass state goals for job placements of TANF applicants in FY13. Despite Maryland's improving economy we look forward to even greater activity in eligibility determination next year with onset of the Affordable Care Act.



The year for our Services Division was also productive. We developed a new model of service delivery for families experiencing drug abuse. The Integrative Case Management Program will team addiction and child welfare staff to work together in-home with our parents experiencing substance abuse. This past year we continued to keep a large portion of our children in Foster Care living in family homes. The implementation of Family Centered Practice several years ago extended our trend of keeping families together in 2013. These two accomplishments are a source of great pride to our Child Welfare team. We are busy preparing to implement the new Alternative Response program that will go into effect next year. This will change how we have traditionally responded to reports of concern regarding children in the community by giving us more flexibility depending on the unique nature of the report. We hope this new approach will better enable us to engage families in working together.

The Adult Services unit partnered with our State's Attorney's Office and law enforcement to increase prosecution of persons abusing and exploiting vulnerable adults in 2013. Our thanks go out to those entities for helping to keep our seniors and disabled clients safe while they remain living in their homes.

Child Support intensified efforts to collect support from absent parents. We continue to utilize a variety of incentives to reinforce responsible parenting. Consistent with most of the other counties in Maryland we saw an overall increase in the amount of support collected last year.

Our Administrative unit worked diligently to increase security measures within the agency. They were successful in the installation of a metal detector in our lobby, updated security measures to control access to certain agency areas and increased lighting and visibility in many areas surrounding our building.

We would like to thank our community partners; our County Commissioners; and the leadership of DHR and State Government for working with us to make FY2013 such a productive year. We look forward to working for the Worcester community in FY2014 to ensure the protection of the vulnerable and supporting the economically disadvantaged.

Advisory Board of Director

Members of the Worcester County Department of Social Services Advisory Board are volunteers appointed by the Worcester County Board of County Commissioners to serve a term of three years. Their many duties include reviewing the Department's programs, assessing the need for new programs and additional resources, advocating for resources from local and state government and promoting awareness of services provided by the Department.

FY2012-FY2013 Board members:

Mary Yenney, Chair

Commissioner Judy Boggs, Ex-Officio

Arlette Bright

Susan Canfora

Nancy Dorman

Nancy Howard

Jeff Kelchner

Emma Klein

Laura McDermott



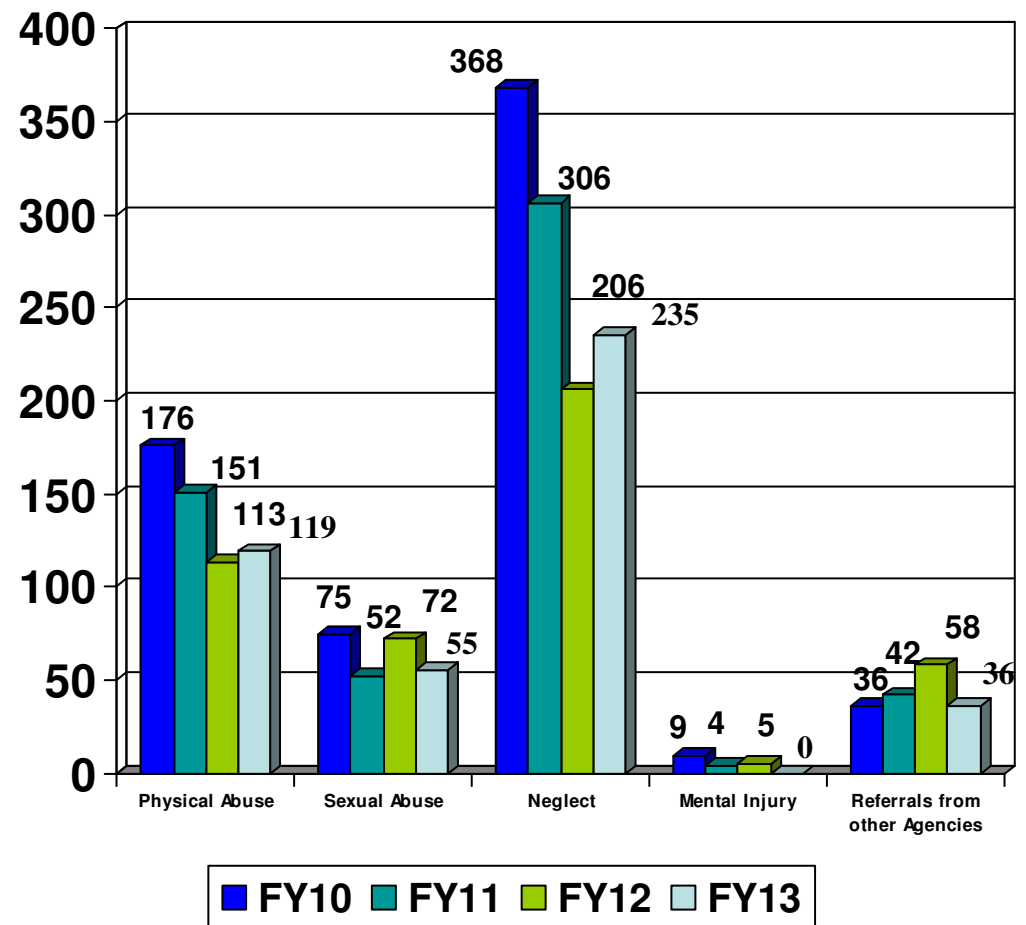
CHILD, FAMILY & ADULT SERVICES

Child Protective Services

It is required by law to respond to all reports of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Child Protective Services workers are responsible for assessing and taking steps to ensure the safety of children.

Accepted investigations FY13

- 119 Physical Abuse
- 55 Sexual Abuse
- 235 Neglect
- 0 Mental Injury
- 36 Referrals from other Agencies (ROA's)



In-Home Services

In-Home Family Services is a time-limited service designed to develop positive, nurturing parent-child relationships to families whose children are at risk of out-of-home placements. The main purpose is to promote the safety and well-being of children and their families. In-Home Family Services provides direct services as well as referring families to community resources to enhance the overall health of the family. In FY13, In-Home Services provided as follows:

- 28 families with 64 children received Services to Families with Children
- 7 families with 13 children received Enhanced Families Now Services
- 7 families with 14 children received Family Preservation Services
- 115 families with 240 children received Consolidated Services

Only 5 children who received the above services for FY13 entered foster care

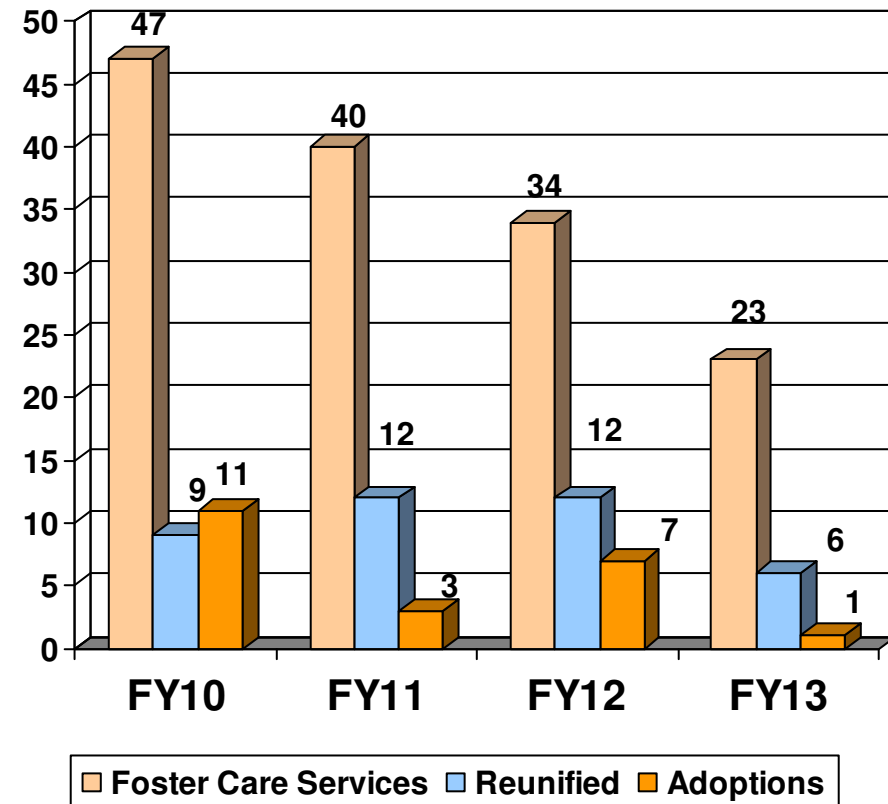
~ The supervisors in the Services Unit completed the "Supervision Matters" training that was developed by DHR to establish the standards and expectations for child welfare supervisors. The training delineated roles of the supervisor and promoted development advancement in the area of leadership and clinical supportive supervision. The training consisted of two days per month over a six month period. Coaching and mentoring was provided to the Agency's two new supervisors to assist with the transfer of learning. During supervision with staff, the supervisor has moved from a predominately monitoring role to a clinically driven approach that enhances the staff's ability to provide direct services to the families and children that we serve.

Out- of-Home Placement

Out-of-Home Placement Services provides services to children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. The main purpose is to provide a safe and stable environment for the child. This can be established through foster care or adoption, placement with relatives or reunification of children with their parents once they can provide a healthy home environment.

Out-of-Home Placement Services for FY13

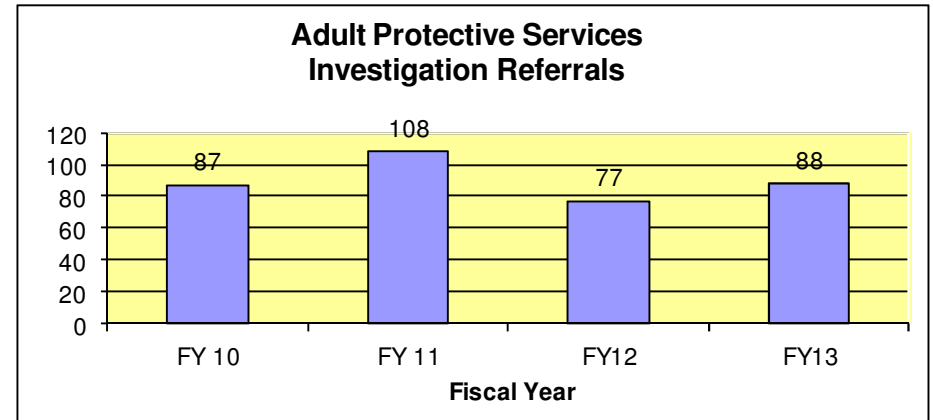
- 23 Out of Home services for children needing protection
- 6 Reunifications
- 1 Finalized Adoption



Adult Services

- **Adult Protective Services**

APS investigated and/or provided continuing services to reduce the risk of abuse, neglect, self-neglect or the exploitation of 88 vulnerable adults in FY13.



- The Adult Public Guardianship Program serves 5 clients as of June 30, 2013. This program protects the person and interests of a vulnerable adult at risk by the court appointment of guardianship to Worcester County DSS as a last resort to enable them to make critical life decisions on the client's behalf. A service plan is sanctioned by the court; then both they and DSS implement and monitor the case for the effectiveness and continued need of guardianship.
- The Project Home Program assisted 2 adult with disabilities or mental illness by placing them in supervised housing where they receive room, board, personal care, and assistance with other daily activities.
- Respite Care Services were provided for 11 families. These services are for their disabled adult caretaker.
- Social Services to Adults (SSTA) case management services were provided to 55 disabled and elderly adults as of June 30, 2013. Staff provided counseling, advocacy, case management, and referral services to assist adult customers function independently in the community.
- In-Home Aide Services were provided to 36 individuals. These services provide personal care, household and therapeutic services to elderly or disabled customers in their homes, enabling these clients to remain living at home rather than being institutionalized. As of June 30, 2013 there were 19 clients on a waiting list for these services.

FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION

Each Family Investment program has different technical and financial eligibility/guidelines that must be met before a customer can be eligible to receive benefits under these programs. Some of these programs are federally funded only, others are state and federally funded, and one is fully state funded. The criteria varies greatly in terms of what the income and resource limits are, what income must be counted, what income may be disregarded, and what deductions, if any, may be applied. The next several pages list the Family Investment programs offered at our Department.

Financial Assistance

The Family Investment Division administers a number of financial assistance programs that support low-income families and individuals. The programs provide a safety net for vulnerable Worcester County citizens who do not have other sources of income. These programs include:

- *Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)*

This program offers time limited financial assistance for families with children. Requirements may include cooperation with Child Support Enforcement and Employment Services. 52 cash recipients have been placed in jobs with an average wage of \$9.45 per hour, which to date is 85% of our fiscal year goal of 61 cash recipients.

- *Welfare Avoidance Grants (WAGs)*

This program provides a one-time authorization of funds to alleviate a crisis which might result in a family becoming dependent on TCA. In FY13, WAGs totaling \$66,404 were issued to assist 37 families.

- *Emergency Assistance for Families with Children (EAFC)*

This program helps families with dependent children resolve crisis situation such as evictions and utility cut-offs. Burial assistance provides limited assistance for eligible individuals. EAFC grants of \$8,033 were issued to 26 families facing such issues.

Financial Assistance (continued)

- *Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP)*

This program provides financial assistance to low-income adults with disabilities who meet certain medical qualifications. Benefits were issued to average of 104 cases per month in FY13.

- *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*

This program provides benefits enabling households to supplement their food budgets. An average of 3,628 cases of adults and children were served each month by this program during FY13. These benefits averaged \$88,7041.67 per month.

Medical & Health Services

Medical Assistance programs are administered by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). Worcester County Department of Social Services establishes eligibility for these programs but does not disperse the funds to pay for services.

- *Medical Assistance SSI Program*

This program provides Medical Assistance coverage to customers who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits from the Social Security Administration. There were 750 active cases at the end of FY13.

- *Medical Assistance – Long Term Care Program*

This program assists individuals residing in long-term care facilities with medical expenses and cost of care. There were 187 active cases at the end of FY13.

- *Medical Assistance – Community Program*

This program serves low-income families and individuals who are aged, blind, or disabled. Services were provided to an average of 3,001 adults and children monthly.

- *Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHiP)*

This program provides Medical Assistance coverage to children and pregnant women. There was a monthly average of 592 cases in FY13.

- *Public Assistance to Adults (PAA)*

This program provided cash assistance for a monthly average of 8 adults who are physically and/or mentally disabled residing in supported living arrangements.

Child Care Programs

- *Purchase of Care (POC)*

This program assisted an average of 310 families monthly with the cost of childcare during FY13. There are presently 7 families on the waiting list at the end of FY13.

~ The Family Investment Administration presented Worcester County Family Investment Administration staff with the Golden Fork Award for the quarter ending September 2012. The Golden Fork Award is based on three (3) months of data and points for timeliness of regular and expedited Food Supplement Program benefits, pre reviews on Food Supplement redeterminations and applications and SNAP Challenge participation and scores. Staff from the Department of Human Resources central office presented the staff with the Golden Fork award at a reception held at the local office.

Housing

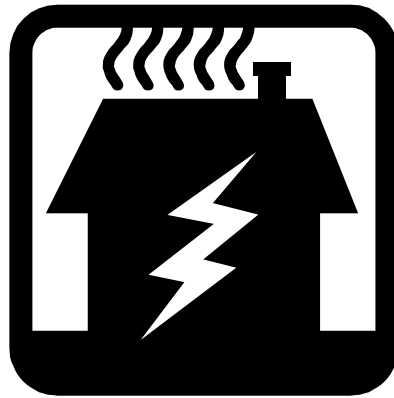
The Worcester County Department of Social Services Housing staff work to stabilize housing and prevent homelessness for the low-income and most vulnerable Worcester County residents. The case managers assist these residents facing a housing crisis with financial aid and other resources. The array of services include: eviction prevention, foreclosure prevention, help with security deposit or first month's rent, emergency motel placement, and budget housing.



~ A major accomplishment in the Services Unit is the partnership with community organizations to provide an outreach program to homeless and needy individuals and families. DSS staff joined with members of the County's Homeless Board and developed a strategy to assist those in need with getting benefits and services to better their current situations or improve long term challenges. In partnership with soup kitchens, administered by local churches, service providers set up a "help desk" in which participants of those designated soup kitchens could meet with agency representatives and apply for various benefits. One gentleman who was recently discharged from the hospital and is homeless was able to apply for medical assistance and food stamps. Without direct contact with this program, he would not have been able to access services because of lack of transportation and an inability to navigate the system. The DSS workers provided the necessary linkage and provided follow up to ensure his benefits would be activated. This countywide program assisted over 150 community members.

Energy Program

Worcester County Energy Assistance helps low-income families with the cost of home heating and electricity. Energy Assistance also helps Worcester County families with an energy emergency.



~ Mary (not her real name) applied for TCA when she and her child relocated here from out of state. Staff placed her on Work Experience at a local office, and soon Mary was hired by the office and was eligible for a full benefit package and wages greater than \$10 per hour. Mary did not have a vehicle and was dependent on others to get her child to day care and get to work. Her case manager referred Mary to Vehicles for Change, walked her through the multi-step process, and took her to Baltimore to the Vehicles for Change office where Mary was able to obtain a vehicle to meet her needs. Mary has since moved smoothly through the probation process and continues to succeed on her job.

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

Child Support Collections

Six (6) agents managed 1,658 cases in fiscal year 2013, of which 1,500 have orders (90.47%)

Amount disbursed — \$3,160,026 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013)

Tax intercepts — \$236,376 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013)

Children with paternity established — 1,262 (103.19%)



The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 provides for passport denial as a child support collection tool. The Act requires the U.S. Secretary of State to refuse to issue a passport to any person certified as owing a child support arrearage in an amount greater than \$2,500. In September 2012, the Worcester County Child Support Office was contacted by a non-custodial parent who had been certified for passport denial. This customer is an actor and was up for a movie role that would require him to travel out of the country. Based on this, the non-custodial parent paid \$12,000 to his child support case for his minor daughter in order to have his passport reinstated.

~ The Child Support Payment Incentive Program encourages non-custodial parents to make consistent child support payments by reducing a portion of the arrears due to the State. The arrears are reduced by half if regular monthly payments are received for one year and the remaining balance is eliminated if regular monthly payments are received for two years. The Worcester County Child Support Office had their first customer successfully complete his first year of this program thereby abating \$19,698.55 due to State arrears. An additional \$10,599.41 was abated in Fiscal Year 2013 after the customer completed his second year in the program for a total of \$30,297.96 credited to State arrears. This case is now closed after 20 years.

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

The Local General Administration (LGA) is responsible for Administration and Finance. The Finance office supports Family Investment, Social Services, and Child Support for accounting operation and budgeting. Administration is responsible for personnel, procurement, inventory, fleet, and computer technology and facilities management. In the past year the unit has effectively utilized resources to meet all agency needs without creating a deficit. The unit continues to streamline some procedures in fiscal, fleet, and personnel to create efficiencies in operations.

